

Guillermo González Camarena



[1917-1965]

MEXICAN

PIONEER OF COLOR TELEVISION



On August 31, 1946, a 29-year old inventor transmitted a color television signal from the basement of his Mexico City laboratory. Thanks to the curiosity, vision, and genius of Guillermo González Camarena, color television was soon introduced to the popular market.

Born in Guadalajara and raised in Mexico City, Camarena showed an early aptitude for inventing, by creating electric toys at age seven. Using scrap parts he found in markets and trash, he built a telescope and then his first radio transmitter at 12; one year later, he enrolled in the prestigious School of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering. At age 17, Camarena applied for the first of his many patents for his invention of the “Chromatic Adapter,” a device enabling color images to be broadcast and seen on black-and-white television screens.

A rising star in Mexico’s broadcasting world, Camarena was named director of Mexico City’s two largest radio stations in 1941. In 1942, he sent the first color images via closed circuit television. In 1945, he helped establish volume standards for TV in Mexico, and by 1952, Camarena became the Technical Director of Mexico’s largest television network.

Camarena had two primary concerns. The first was technical: to design a simple “color wheel” system allowing color TV images to be widely seen. His second concern was social. He believed that color TV sets should be affordable to the typical Mexican consumer, television should help curb illiteracy, and evening programming should be “family-friendly.”



There was an Illinois angle to Camarena’s career. In 1950, Chicago’s Columbia College authorized production of televisions using the color system Camarena had invented. Therefore, some of Illinois’ first color TV sets were made in Mexico.

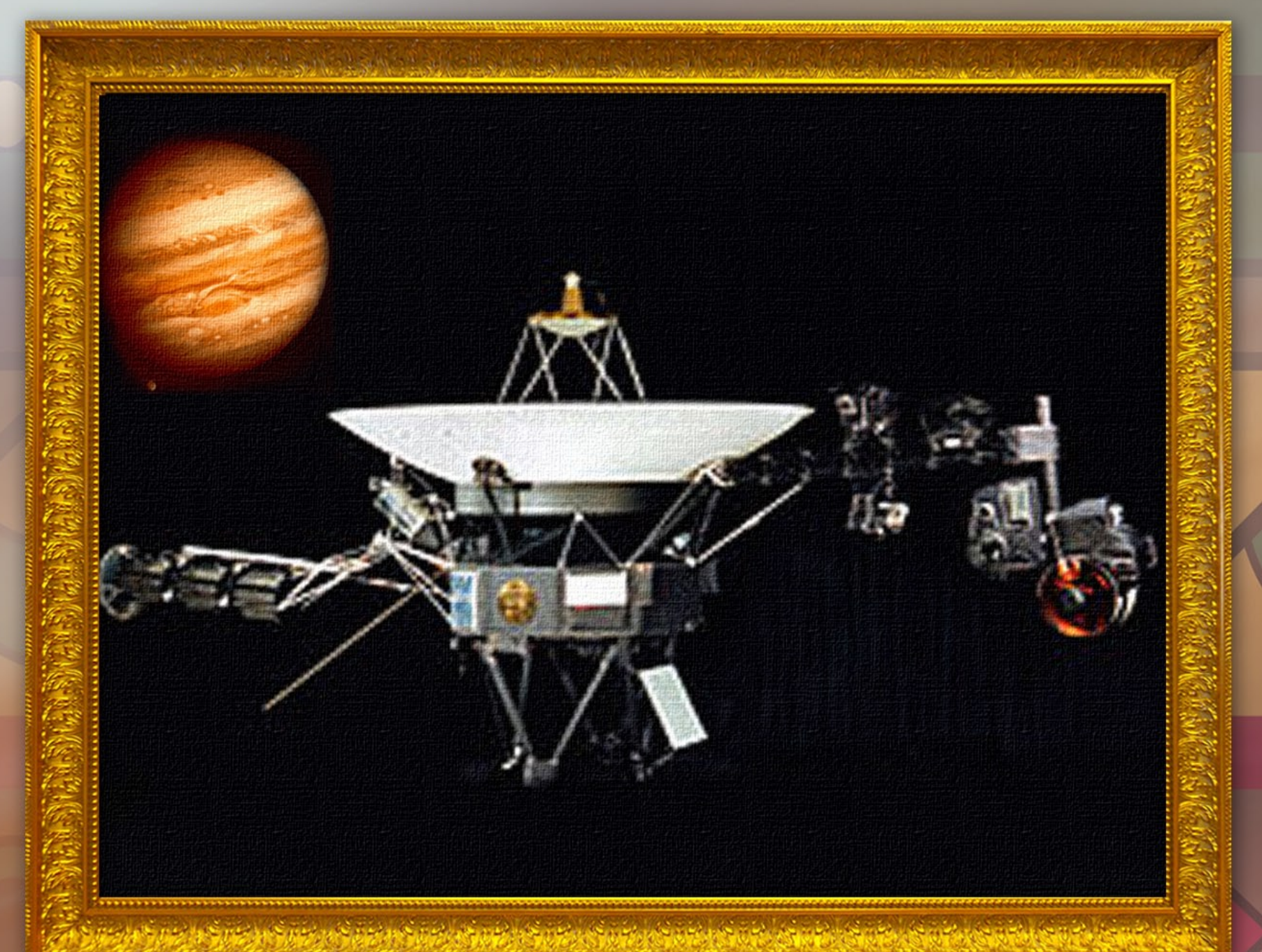
In 1963, Camarena’s “Sequential Trichromatic System” was used to air Mexico’s first nationwide color broadcast, *Paraíso Infantil*. A year later, Camarena presented his newest refinement – “simplified bicolor” – at the New York

World’s Fair. Tragically, Camarena was killed in a 1965 car crash while inspecting a TV transmitter in Veracruz.

One of Camarena’s inventions went further than even he could have imagined while he was alive. His “Tricolor” system was used in the 1979 NASA Voyager mission to capture humanity’s first video images of Jupiter, a fitting distinction for one of the 20th Century’s great inventors.

Camarena portrait courtesy of www.fayerwayer.com

Voyager images courtesy of Wikipedia/NASA Voyager program



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